



CITY OF SAINT PAUL

Melvin Carter, Mayor

HUMAN RIGHTS AND EQUAL ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY COMMISSION

Maria Mitchell, Chair

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Ward 5

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Date: November 26th, 2019

To: City Council Members

Amy Brendmoen, Council President and Ward 5

Dai Thao, Ward 1

Rebecca Noecker, Ward 2

Chris Tolbert, Ward 3

Mitra Jalali Nelson, Ward 4

Kassim Busuri, Ward 6

Jane Prince, Ward 7

From: HREEO Commission

Subject: Statement on arrest and conviction record

Dear Saint Paul City Council members:

The Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity Commission is deeply committed to the promotion of equal opportunity for all. The ability of all Saint Paul residents to have equal access to equal opportunities is, in part, dependent on the creation of racially and economically integrated living patterns in our city. It is with this perspective that we are writing to you about a resolution that provides equitable protection to all Saint Paul residents.

WHEREAS, Black, Native American, and Latinx people are dramatically overrepresented in Minnesota’s prison and jail populations, our inequities are among the highest in the nation,

WHEREAS, Latinx people are imprisoned in Minnesota at a rate 2.5 times higher than White people,

WHEREAS, Black people are imprisoned in Minnesota at a rate 11 times higher than White people,



WHEREAS, White people comprise 83 percent of the state's population, but represent only 47 percent of the prison population in Minnesota,

WHEREAS, Black people comprise 5 percent of Minnesota's population, but represent 31 percent of the prison population,

WHEREAS, there are racial inequities in arrests, convictions, and sentencing, particularly for drug-related offenses,

WHEREAS, Black Minnesotans are more likely than White Minnesotans to be arrested, and after arrest are more likely to be convicted,

WHEREAS, Black people face disproportionately harsh sentences, compared with White people, after conviction,

WHEREAS, from 2008 to 2016, Minnesota's crime rate dropped 24 percent, but the incarceration rate increased 1 percent,

WHEREAS, approximately 8 percent of Minnesota adults have felony convictions,

WHEREAS, approximately 123,000 Minnesotans are currently incarcerated or under criminal justice supervision,

WHEREAS, people with a criminal conviction frequently have trouble finding housing, which damages family and community stability,

WHEREAS, people who have been incarcerated are at higher risk of becoming homeless, and people who are unsheltered are at higher risk of becoming incarcerated,

WHEREAS, most types of criminal offenses do not significantly increase a household's likelihood of a negative housing outcome when other factors are held constant,



WHEREAS, the effect of a prior criminal offense on a resident's housing outcome declines over time,

WHEREAS, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has issued guidance that housing providers may use arrest and conviction record background checks in only limited ways, and must show that doing so serves a legitimate, nondiscriminatory business purpose,

WHEREAS, all residents of the City of Saint Paul deserve access to safe, stable housing,

WHEREAS, the success and safety of every City of Saint Paul resident is dependent on the success and safety of their neighbors,

THEREFORE, the City of Saint Paul Human Rights and Equal Economic Opportunity Commission supports fair housing protections for persons with arrest and conviction records and supports limiting look-back periods for certain crimes.

Thank you,

HREEO Commissioners

Sources

- <https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/practice/healthymnpartnership/docs/2017MNStatewideHealthAssessment.pdf>
- <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/profiles/MN.html>
- <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2018/12/13/ex-prisoners-opportunity-tight-job-market-minnesota>
- <https://www.wilder.org/wilder-research/research-library/success-housing-how-much-does-criminal-background-matter>